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Resist Newsletter, Nov-Dec 2012

Resist

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RESIST



On Solidarity and Intentionality

Civilian-Soldier Alliance and Iraq Veterans Against the War are building a new model for antiwar activism

By Sergio España and Siri Margerin

We all stood up and were asked to form a line. There were so many of us in the room, we actually had to curve the line from one side to the other. We organized ourselves chronologically, in order of how long each of us had been involved with Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). From the founding days in 2004 to just a minute ago, from Kelly Dougherty, a founding member of IVAW and former executive director, on one side to Becca von Behren, a lawyer with Swords to Plowshares who joined Civilian Solidarity Alliance (CivSol) barely a week ago, our curved line was eight years long. Threaded throughout with the IVAW members stood members of CivSol. All of the founding members are present and a crop of brand new members. This is what solidarity looks like to us.

Squeezed in between super storm Sandy and the election madness, the 2012 joint convention of IVAW and CivSol was a brief oasis of intentionality and solidarity. We gathered in Baltimore, Maryland just a day after the storm. People traveled from across the country. From waterlogged New York City to the sunny San Francisco Bay Area, from Texas to Toronto, veterans, active duty service members and civilian allies gathered not only to continue the struggle against

militarism but also to celebrate our community of activists.

As it goes with national grassroots organizations without a wealth of free time and money, we have relatively few opportunities to actually meet face to face which is what makes our shared time at convention so precious.

Healing the wounds

This year's convention was titled "Healing the Wounds."

Eight years after the founding of IVAW, it has become clear that our work has to be about two things which are constant and simultaneous: resistance and healing.

IVAW was formed by folks returning from the first wave of deployments to Iraq. They came back changed by their experiences, eyes open, angry, outraged, and wounded. They were met at home

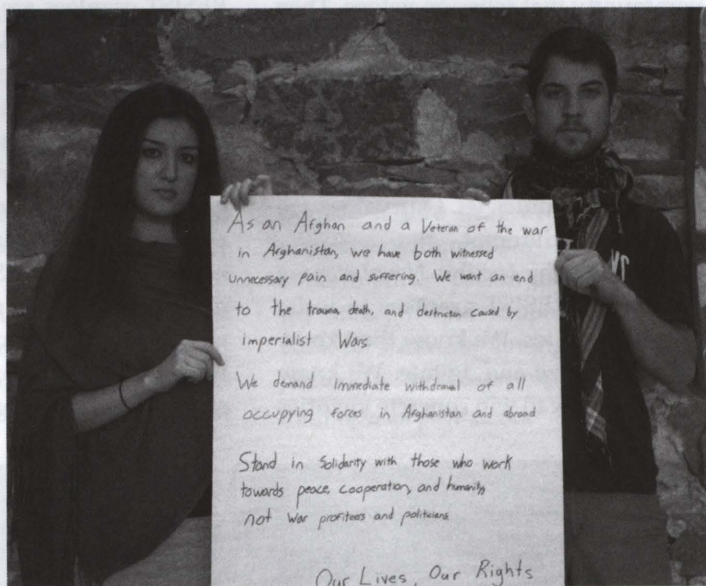


Photo Courtesy of Civilian-Soldier Alliance

"As an Afghan and a Veteran of the war in Afghanistan, we have both witnessed unnecessary pain and suffering. We want an end to the trauma, death, and destruction caused by imperialist wars. We demand immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces in Afghanistan and abroad. Stand in solidarity with those who work towards peace cooperation and humanity, not war profiteers and politicians. Our Lives, Our Rights."
- Suraia Sahar of Afghans for Peace and Justin Hall of Iraq Veterans Against the War

by an antiwar movement ferociously hungry for their voices. But just as the 15 million strong worldwide antiwar movement that blossomed in the months before the war withered in the face of the movement's inability to prevent the war from happening, so too did IVAW members find that telling their stories, their

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The Value of Organizing

By Saif Rahman

Oscar Wilde once wrote, "Nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing." I think he was only partially right. In a world where almost everything has become a commodity, from nature to imagination to love—it's true that it can be hard to truly value anything. But Oscar Wilde didn't meet any RESIST grantees.

This is the last *Newsletter* of 2012 and we wanted to focus this edition on something we as a movement don't discuss as much as we should – values. We are a community that relies on values. They guide us, they empower us, they are not only what we believe, but more importantly, how we live.

We often work so hard and tirelessly, we seldom discuss or appreciate what grounds and guides us. Our values are what make us different.

So that is why for this *Newsletter* we asked a few RESIST grantees to write about *their* values. We know they know how to organize and agitate. We know they know how to win concrete victories

to improve the lives of people in their communities. We know they know how to connect issues and fight for justice for everyone

But more importantly, their values are what make them who they are and the best at what they do. As we enter 2013, we think we are at a moment in which we really need to put out what we are for, not just what we are against.

Just as corporations push their values on us, we need to equally organize around and advance what we value. As you read this *Newsletter*, you'll learn how RESIST grantees are organizing around such values as solidarity, intentionality, community, and hopefulness. These are just a few of the values which RESIST grantees embody, embrace and espouse

We hope this tiny sample offers a glimpse into the world of the best grassroots organizations in the country. In the end, we here at RESIST value nothing more than the organizers and activists who have dedicated their lives to this work. And as a community, I think it is safe to speak for everyone when we say,

the most important thing that we value is each other.

Saif Rahman is the director of communications for RESIST and the editor of the Newsletter.



Grantee Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance has been using an assortment of non-violent actions to close the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex and for a nuclear free world. See story on page 10.



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On Building Bridges and Tearing Down Walls

Prison Birth Project works for reproductive justice at the intersection of motherhood and the criminal justice system

By Erika Arthur

In 2008, a new women's jail in Chicopee, Massachusetts opened without any programs in place for pregnant people. That year, Marianne Bullock and Lisa Andrews met at the Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program's (CLPP) Annual Reproductive Justice Conference. Their personal experiences with the prison system and their political interest in healing justice had led them both to attend the conference's workshops on women and prisons. It was there that they met Tina Reynolds of Women on the Rise Telling Herstory (WORTH), who gave them the advice and encouragement they needed to make a move together. Both new mothers themselves, neither Marianne nor Lisa could tolerate the idea that people inside the new local jail were going to have to go through pregnancy, abortion, birth, postpartum, giving up children for adoption, and parenting from jail, without support.

So within the tradition of the reproductive justice movement, they scrambled to fill a critical gap in whatever ways they could: at first with only their own time, energy, money, frustration, love, and dedication. They were in the jail within weeks of meeting at the CLPP conference, talking with pregnant women, forming what would become the Mothers Among Us groups, and building the backbone of the Prison Birth Project (PBP) that carries us to this day.

About a year and a half ago, in an effort to build the sustainability of the organization, Marianne and Lisa, along with other staff members, volunteers and supporters, made the decision to tran-

sition into a collective leadership structure and formed the Leadership Circle, or the "LC", as we affectionately call it. We're still ironing out this structure, but what is clear is that the LC is tasked with holding the mission and values of the group front and center as we go about our daily decision-making and work to build our capacity.

PBP's values were at the heart of an intensive planning process we, the LC, embarked on this past spring and summer. One of the major goals we articulated during this process exemplifies one of our most important values, one that has been with PBP since its inception:

To promote the leadership of people at the intersection of motherhood and the criminal justice system in order to participate in the broader reproductive justice movement.

To us this means being led by those most impacted, engaging in broader movements for social change, and acknowledging the array of factors that

shape people's lives, decisions, access, health, wealth, and wellbeing. While we have already met this goal in many small ways, we still have a long way to go to realize it fully. And our limited capacity certainly means this journey is slower than we'd like it to be. However, while there are many obstacles to achieving this goal, not the least of which is the isolating nature of incarceration, we are strategically working to create models that combine direct service and organizing, empowered self care and analysis of systematic oppression, mutual support and advocacy. Models that work around the jail's walls at the same time they work against their very existence.

PBP is very much about meeting people where they are and locating ourselves within this work, I have never been in jail or prison myself, nor have my family members spent time behind bars. So I am not among the most impacted by incarceration. Being a white

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Members of the Prison Birth Project at their first community event.

Photo courtesy of the Prison Birth Project

own life-shattering, world-changing, soul-stripping stories, over and over in the service of other people's events and agendas, was neither stopping the war in its tracks nor building an organization able to sustain its members for the long haul. Additionally, their relationship with the civilian community was beginning to strain as non-veteran activists would simply invite them to be at the front of a march or poster without asking for their fuller participation in the organizing work or incorporating their insights to support the issues that mattered directly to them.

With time, IVAW began turning away from functioning solely as a speakers bureau and CivSol members began stepping up to support their leadership and organize shoulder to shoulder. The founders of CivSol carried the same analysis that our newest members carry: the understanding that it will only be through joining the struggles and concerns of both the civilian and military communities that we can develop a framework for challenging militarism and healing our communities. We believe that organizing resistance within the military is a strategy that can directly end war and occupation. When service members withdraw their

labor from a war that depends on their consent, they become a powerful force for change. When civilians understand their intimate relationship with war and its consequences at home, as well as abroad, we stand strong.

Building a civilian-soldier alliance

CivSol began as a loose network of people organizing within the circles of GI resistance and support of antiwar active duty service members and veterans. Our aim is to support the leadership of people most affected by war and occupation and to build movements where healing and personal growth are central components of organizing. It was quickly apparent that IVAW was a nexus for this work as they were yearning for this level of analysis, commitment, and perhaps most importantly, mutual trust.

We have been through a lot since we began our relationship with IVAW. CivSol members were there when the first chapters were started in 2006. We supported Operation First Casualty in 2007, where members went out "on patrol" in an American city "arresting" civilians, bagging them and marching them off, giving bystanders a tiny taste of what occupation may be like. We were there for Winter Soldier Iraq and Afghanistan,

modeled on the Vietnam era hearings, bringing eyewitness testimony home to the US from Iraq and Afghanistan revealing what was actually being done in our names, and for The March on the Democratic National Convention in Denver in 2008 where IVAW members led a march to the doors of the DNC where they presented a letter to staff for the freshly nominated Barack Obama.

In 2010 IVAW and CivSol came together for five days in Chicago to hold a leadership training and campaign organizing retreat and come up with our first strategic campaign, Operation Recovery: Stop the Deployment of Traumatized Troops. The Operation Recovery organizing drive worked out of Under the Hood (the GI Coffeehouse at Fort Hood, Texas and another RESIST grantee) throughout 2011 & 2012. In May 2012 we supported IVAW's march on the NATO Summit, where 46 IVAW members returned their hard earned medals to the NATO generals in protest.

Hundreds of other events and actions large and small have been organized nationally, regionally or in chapters. People have come and gone, returned or remain, but our vision remains shared and constant.

We practice a transformational form of organizing, we aim to win short

term victories to improve lives in the immediate, but we keep our eye on the long term transformation to a just society based on human rights, equality, and cooperation. These last four years in this community are a testament to the idea. Through our work, with a firm commitment to developing universal leadership and healing within our ranks, the changes are profound and deeply



Members of Civilian-Soldier Alliance and Iraq Veterans Against the War at their joint gathering.

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Solidarity+Intentionality

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hopeful. Military culture is notoriously misogynistic, homophobic, hierarchical and emotionally closed. In addition, with the physical, psychological, and moral trauma that comes with military service, the challenge becomes even greater.

Yet at this convention, transformation is manifest. Leadership by women and by LGBTQ identified people is the new normal, fully embraced and absorbed not just by new members but by all the members. We all have transformed along with our organizations. No one would say it has been easy, or that we are anywhere close to being done. But what has been accomplished is remarkable.

Solidarity without borders

Suraia came from Toronto to attend the Convention. She is a founding member of Afghans for Peace. The war in Afghanistan is not over. Yet we are organizing with veterans and Afghans impacted by the war together. This work is also developing with Iraqis in spots across the country. This is delicate work but truly remarkable. In Chicago, Illinois there was a dinner prepared for IVAW and CivSol members by an Iraqi woman, a refugee from the war, and some friends of hers from Somalia. The next day a young service member spoke about how he had been so moved by a recruiting film he was shown on his first night at boot camp, because he was going to be part of something greater than himself. "But," he said, "Last night I knew that finally I am now really part of something bigger than myself."

The War in Iraq is "over." The War in Afghanistan is "drawing down." Whatever those terms aim to imply, it certainly doesn't mean that people have stopped dying from war. The wars may be less hot, but they are not over for the 2.3 million service members who cycled through those wars, often repeatedly and often while carrying previous trauma



Under the Hood Cafe, a RESIST grantee, in Killeen, Texas is a community space where soldiers, families, friends and community members can socialize, get information on service members' and veterans rights, get referrals for legal and wellness services and participate in creative workshops.

with them. Certainly Suraia and our other Afghan and Iraqi allies will tell us that it is not over for the millions of civilians who have endured a decade of war and occupation, and it never will be. They are not over for rest of the US either, who will be paying for this war for generations, sacrificing health, education and employment benefits to do so. It is difficult to keep the issues of the wars on the table when everyone is struggling so hard for work and a home.

Solidarity across issues

To build a strong movement, we also need to build solidarity across those working on different issue areas. During the convention there were workshops building solidarity campaigns with health care workers from National Nurses United around staffing ratios and quality of care at VA hospitals for example. There was a workshop by the Center for Constitutional Rights on preparing a hearing at the Inter American Commission on Human Rights as well as to promote our latest outreach and organizing tool for Operation Recovery, an Appeal for Redress for service members who have not been able to access the kind of care they need to recover from their service.

The weekend concluded with a panel of inspirational allies, focusing on the

theme of "Learning from other People's Movements." We are building solidarity outward with National Nurses United, the Center for Constitutional Rights, United Workers, Student Farmworker Alliance, Poverty Initiative, and Afghans for Peace. The closing conversation made it clear that our understanding of solidarity, and our shared work and hardships over the past years have allowed us to come to a place now where we realize that our work is a part of a whole. Essential, as each other piece is, we are a part of a movement, working towards genuine international solidarity of people who recognize that we rise and fall together. We are joining in solidarity with the "all of us" who have been fragmented by oppression and come together to heal as a whole. Who would want to be anywhere else?

Sergio España is a Baltimore, Maryland resident and a member of the Civilian-Soldier Alliance, a RESIST grantee. In addition, Sergio is working with Healthcare is a Human Right-Maryland and is a member of the Student Farmworker Alliance and United Workers. Siri Margerin is a longtime organizer for peace and justice, GI Resistance and an anti-militarist living in the San Francisco Bay Area. She is utterly committed to the transformation of our society through solidarity, respect and healing.

On Breaking Out with Grassroots Power

In just over a year, BreakOUT exemplifies what the grassroots can do

By Wes Ware

In December 2011, I was walking from Tulane Avenue towards Banks Street to my home and was stopped by a New Orleans Police Department Officer. The officer said that I looked too young to be out at night and asked for my [identification]. I said that I was 21 and identified myself as a transgender woman. I also replied that my I.D. was in my home and that I would consent to be escorted to my home to retrieve my I.D., which was only a block away. However the police officer instead insisted that I put my hands on the hood of his car. I was afraid of what might happen next and as I turned, the police officer immediately hit me with his car. I got up, bleeding from my leg and limping, and was struck by the vehicle a second time. I then attempted to run and take cover in the back cargo section of a U-Haul truck. The officer called for back up, I surrendered with my hands up. The much larger officer then slammed me onto the ground with his knee pressed to my face. I required immediate medical treatment at the hospital and then was transferred to Orleans Parish Prison. All of this for walking while black, transgender and young. — BreakOUT member testimony

In 2011, right as we were about to start filming a video entitled “We Deserve Bet-

ter,” we lost another transgender community member to violence, which was the second in just under two months in New Orleans. Then, two days before we were set to go to Detroit, Michigan for the Allied Media Conference, one of our founding members was wrongfully arrested for fitting the description of a “cross-dressing man” and incarcerated in a notoriously violent jail where she still sits, awaiting trial. And in terrible irony, immediately after one of our BreakOUT! meetings last month where we were working on our campaign against discriminatory policing, one of our members was stopped and arrested for “walking while transgender.”

Needless to say, BreakOUT! is as grassroots as it gets.

Since our founding just over a year ago, we have secured language in a Consent Decree between the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) and the Department of Justice that prohibits profiling of LGBTQ people based on gender identity or sexual orientation. We made a video about our members’ experiences with the NOPD called “We Deserve Better” for use in their officer trainings. We’ve held StoryCircles with the Congress of Day Laborers to talk about the shared experiences of being targeted by police officers and criminalized for who we are. We shared

testimony in City Council from our transgender members about their experiences with the NOPD and presented a proposed policy to the NOPD written by BreakOUT! youth, predominately young Black transgender women. And we’ve taken our work (and our youth members) on the road, from Detroit, Michigan to Atlanta, Georgia to Oakland, California.

Despite our victories, there are disconnects between what is happening in federal court and local policing policy and what is happening on the ground in the streets of New Orleans. For us, the easier thing has been reforming policing policies in a notoriously corrupt NOPD and building our political power as marginalized, often homeless or street-based LGBTQ youth.

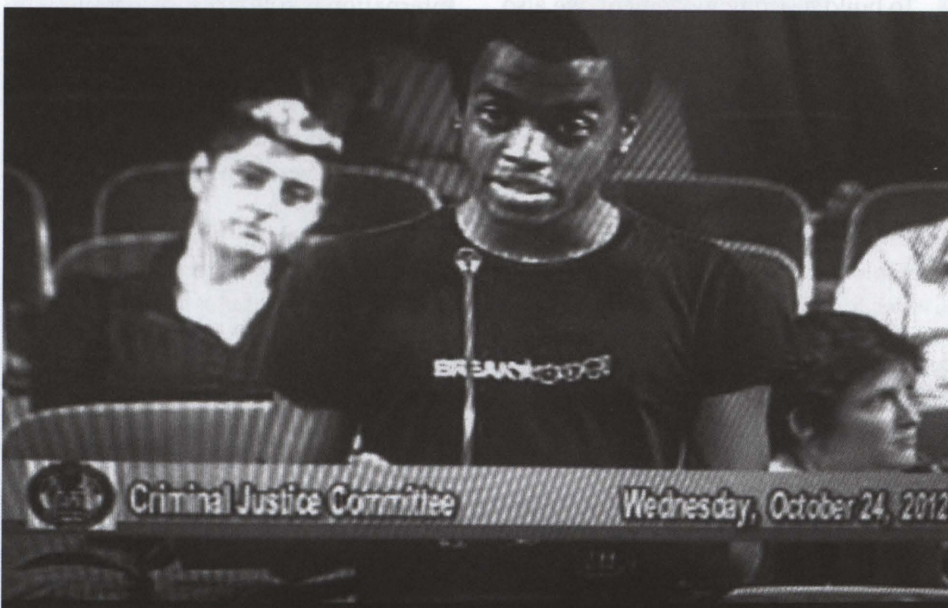
Power of short-term victories in a long-term context

We must remain clear as we do this work that our policy reforms are merely tools we use to move us toward a larger vision of gender justice, racial justice, and an end to the prison industrial complex. And sometimes our policy reforms, while important and crucial to our survival, are merely harm reduction.

After missing several meetings and events recently, one of our members said, “I really want to be a part of New Orleans and BreakOUT! but I have found that it is so hard for survival.” This same young woman was once trapped inside her house, afraid to leave for fear the police would stop her and arrest her after her gender non-conforming boyfriend was murdered.

While BreakOUT!’s short-term goals are to win campaigns to reform the NOPD and develop our youth leaders, our longer-term goals are to build alliances with other marginalized groups fighting the criminal justice system and remove the barriers that prevent our transgender young people from being successful and to create the kind of New Orleans where we can all leave our houses without fear.

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BreakOUT! member speaking in front of the New Orleans City Council

On Building Political Power

Why QUEEROCRACY took to the streets at a Presidential Debate

What we did

QUEEROCRACY, in coalition with Housing Works, ACT UP NY and Occupy Long Island, brought the injustice of HIV criminalization to the forefront of a massive demonstration outside Hofstra University before the second of three presidential debates on October 16. We collectively organized four buses to travel from NYC to the debate and back—just under 200 people traveled with us to Hofstra, 25 of whom wore orange jumpsuits. We swarmed the large demonstration which was full of people with various messages for the presidential candidates, chanting, “HIV is NOT a crime, ACT UP, Fight Back, Decriminalize!”

How we did it

There had been no mention from either candidate on HIV/AIDS issues during the presidential race so QUEEROCRACY felt compelled to bring our fight against HIV criminalization as close to the debate as we could get it. In order to ensure our demonstration would be strong in numbers and powerful in message, QUEEROCRACY organized several teach-ins around New York City and on Long Island on HIV criminalization prior to the demo. We also hosted a citywide media training for participants and members to provide skills and knowledge to prepare them to speak to the press during the protest and at future demonstrations. In addition, we invited the Center for HIV Law and Policy (CHLP) to provide a training for members about the laws and statutes that criminalize positive people in the United States as well as about specific legislation that addresses HIV criminalization and stigma.



Cassidy is a staff member and lead organizer for QUEEROCRACY, a RESIST grantee. She continues to be a major driving force behind QUEEROCRACY's direct action planning and community outreach. She helped head the planning of "A New Discovery: Queer Immigration in Perspective" and co-leads the organizing on QUEEROCRACY's current campaign against HIV Criminalization.



Why we did it

The United States is seen by much of the world as a model for justice and democracy, yet we have more HIV-related prosecutions than any other country and our rates of incarceration are the highest in the world. According to the Positive Justice Project's HIV Criminalization Fact Sheet, "thirty-four states and two US territories explicitly criminalize HIV exposure through sex, shared needles or, in some states, exposure to "bodily fluids" that can include saliva. At least 35 states have singled out people who have tested positive for HIV for criminal prosecution or enhanced sentences, either under HIV-specific criminal laws or under general criminal laws governing crimes such as assault, attempted murder or reckless endangerment." In such cases, proof of intent to transmit and/or actual transmission of HIV have rarely been necessary for prosecution. Disclosure is often the only affirmative defense available to those facing prosecution, yet more often than not, it is extremely difficult to prove.

Breaking Out with Grassroots Power

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We also have to remind ourselves, as our elders often do, that it has taken decades to get us to where we are now and it will likely take just as long to get ourselves out of it. And sometimes the most powerful wins aren't always what make headlines.

It's the resistance of our incarcerated members who write us letters and send us their thoughts about our campaign work from their prison block. It's when members stand up for each other and read each other's testimonies in front of the City Council when the stakes are too high for their peers to stand up against the NOPD in a public forum. It's when through a translator, we discover that what is happening to undocumented day laborers in our city has close connections to our own stories of being criminalized and pushed to the margins.

If we've learned anything over the past year and a half, it's that we have to take the time to build relationships with our allies and build community with one another to prepare us for the long haul.

Power of shared experiences

At the end of October when we presented in front of City Council for the first time, we had over 50 individuals and organizations submit public comment cards in support of our members. One of these was the Congress of Day Laborers (or the Congreso) and is an example of the kind of alliances we must nurture to win justice for our communities and hold public officials accountable for the policy reforms they promise us and ensure their implementation on the ground.

BreakOUT! members, predominately Black transgender young women, and the Congreso, predominately undocumented Latino reconstruction workers (workers who came here to help rebuild our city in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina), have worked in solidarity and supported one another with the understanding that our communities experience criminalization in very similar ways. Through a translator, we have held "Story Circles" to discuss the similarities and differences of our experience of being criminalized,

spoken in support of one another at City Council, held workshops together and partnered on a community I.D. project, and attended actions in solidarity with one another to expose conditions at our local jail or demand the end to deportations at the federal ICE building.

Understanding the links between the violence perpetuated by Vice officers in the NOPD who profile African American transgender women and approach them for sex before ultimately arresting them and ICE officials who profile detained Latino people for deportation proceedings as they sit in jail for minor infractions, we call our partnership "From Vice to ICE."

The work that we have been doing also resulted in a beautiful show of solidarity at the Urban Congress hosted by the National Right to the City Alliance. In addition to attending the "Day of Action" together, a *BreakOUT!* member joined a delegation of community organizers and activists who volunteered to go into ICE offices and deliver a letter in support of the Southern 32 (a group of immigrant rights activists who are facing deportation for speaking out), while the rest of the attendees waited outside and listened to stories from people facing deportation for standing up for their rights.

The following day, the two groups

conducted the workshop pulling out themes of shared experience with one another. Among the concrete examples were:

- Difficulty getting and keeping meaningful employment due to immigration status, gender identity or expression, race/ethnicity, and nationality, being paid lower wages, subjected to poor working conditions, and working with little to no job protection.

- Criminalization of survival strategies and work, including sex work and raids from Vice squads or ICE on day laborer corners.

- Street harassment and profiling by law enforcement on basis of race/ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, gender identity, and gender expression.

- Longer hold times or higher bonds in Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) due to OPP's collaboration with ICE and transgender women being deemed a "flight risk."

- Regulated movement in public spaces, such as being prohibited from being in certain areas looking for work, people who have previously been charged with sex work being prohibited from the French Quarter by court order, and people being afraid to walk to the store

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BreakOUT! protesting to stop deportations and to divest from Orleans Parish Prison.

Breaking Out with Grassroots Power

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out of fear of harassment by the NOPD or ICE.

• One last commonality that was discussed was the difficulty obtaining proper identification, not having legal identification, and the risk of showing identification that contains a country of origin or a legal name, gender marker, or photograph inconsistent with gender presentation. With the help of the Congreso, *BreakOUT!* has now also developed community I.D.'s for members with a similar format. The *BreakOUT!* I.D.'s have members photographs, legal name and date of birth, preferred name and gender pronoun, and rights with law enforcement on the back. The cards position members as a part of a larger community, set the tone and expectation of respect for interactions with the police, as well as help to protect members' legal rights.

Power of storytelling

More than securing language in a Consent Decree with the NOPD or forcing the NOPD to meet with us prior to adopting an LGBTQ policy, we are working to build a movement across all people experiencing criminalization in our city. We are thankful to have had the opportunities to not just talk theoretically, but actually strengthen the deep, personal relationships between members who are most affected by criminalization, learning from one another's firsthand experiences and insights, and overcoming difference and language barriers to find community in some of the most unexpected places.

We've also learned about the power of storytelling. Not only does this help us build relationships with one another and build community within our small group, it is a key strategy to winning our campaigns. When we can safely and courageously share our stories with the outside world, we can easily control the message of policing and criminalization, because no one can argue our experience.

Getting ourselves on the agenda for the City Council Criminal Justice Subcommittee meeting last month to present our proposed policy to the NOPD in a public forum wasn't just important

to winning a new policy; it was important because through sharing the stories and testimony of our members was part of a longer road toward healing and justice for our communities. In fact, when an ally stood to speak in support of our members, he reminded a City Councilmember who remarked on the fact that so many of our members don't come forward with police complaints, saying it is "not for lack of courage, but because of the power of violence."

Despite that violence, there is a rumble in New Orleans of black transgender young women, other LGBTQ youth of color, and formerly-incarcerated youth, who are building their political power and positioning themselves as experts over their own lives.

Even from jail cells in a state that incarcerates more people than anywhere else in the world, transgender young people in prisons in the South are organizing (and have been organizing) every single day. Just sheer survival in a Louisiana prison requires resistance.

One of our incarcerated transgender members who is in a men's facility says there is a multiracial group of transgender young women incarcerated with her who are all writing letters to the warden to get access to hormones. Other members, including those in youth prisons, have written letter after letter and filed grievance after grievance, creating a paper trail that will hopefully help someone one day even if it doesn't help them right away. They're documenting their stories and trying to build the foundation for their legal cases. They use the law library and write to us with other research requests. And our members have continued



Photo courtesy of the BreakOUT!

Buttons saying "My gender is not probable cause!" and "Yes, I'm in the right bathroom."

to participate in our campaigns from their jail cells, sending us recommendations and writing us poems that inspire us to keep fighting. We send cards to them every week to update them on our work and keep their spirits up.

Santos Alvarado, a member of the Congress of Day Laborers recently spoke through a translator at City Council in support of *BreakOUT!* He said, "We know what it means to be stopped for the color of your skin, because you look different, because you talk different, because you are different." While *BreakOUT!* is organizing in the trenches to win our campaigns, we keep our eye on the larger vision for racial and gender justice, summed up by Alvarado, "so that we can all walk down the street feeling safe as friends and no one has to feel like they are coming from another planet."

Wes Ware is the founder and director of BreakOUT! and is a 2011 Soros US Justice Fellowship recipient. BreakOUT! recently was awarded a RESIST "Hell Yes!" grant which "honors the spirit of resistance to illegitimate authority and is awarded to groups that embody the moral clarity, courage and political commitment to challenge the forces that drive toward war and place profits above people."

On Planting Seeds in Tough Soil

Three pieces of advice from Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance

By Ralph Hutchinson

Being an activist, especially on an intractable issue like nuclear abolition, is a great way to nurture one's cynical side. When your President commits the nation to a future free of nuclear weapons, it should be a heady moment, but then you hear him say "It may not happen in my lifetime..." and then the Secretary of State, celebrating the new START Treaty with her staff, repeats it and adds "or in successive lifetimes..." Well, that'll do it.

Just try to keep your eyes on the prize, there are a million distractions—little things like wars, executions, drone strikes, deportations, extraordinary renditions...

So how do we keep faith with our vision of a world where relationships, personal and national, are based on mutual respect rather than the projection of military power? How do we keep doing the work, day after day? It's one thing to push back against the oppressive weight of injustice and inequality through resistance, challenging its power with our faith in the greater power of nonviolence. It's another thing to proactively build the world we want to live in.

Here's what keeps me going after 30 years...

First, clarity of purpose. For thirteen years, members of our community have gathered every Sunday evening, rain or shine, uninterrupted, to vigil at the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where the US continues to manufacture thermonuclear weapons of mass destruction and, if we don't stop them, will soon be building a new \$7.5 billion bomb plant. One Sunday the leader asked us to imagine waking up Monday morning in a world that was unchanged except for one thing—war and the threat of war had disappeared. "What would you do?" she asked.

After a few minutes, we went around the circle. "I would go down the block to the arts co-op and throw clay," said one. "I would play a sonata on the piano," said another. "Paint." "Go outside, throw back

my head and dance."

I realized when we finished that every single person had described themselves engaged in a creative act. It struck me that we had defined peace, a word usually defined by what it isn't. But if war is the ultimate destructive act, then peace is the creative act. If we value peace—not just non-war, but social justice, human rights, protection of dignity—we must create.

Second, don't do it alone. One winter afternoon I was invited to speak to a psychology class at a local college. We gathered in a nice room with large windows filtering in yellow light, and I began to tell the students about the bomb plant in our backyard, the threat of nuclear weapons, the efforts to stop production that have not, as yet, succeeded, the contamination from weapon production and other activities. As I talked, the sun dropped below the horizon. We hadn't turned on the lights, and soon we were sitting in winter's evening gray. I finished my part. "So," I said, "Any questions? Comments?"

Silence. "Anybody?" I asked. Nobody. Finally I made out a hand rising in the back of the room. It was the professor. "Larry?" I said. "I was wondering if you could maybe say something, anything really, that might be a little bit hopeful?"

I realized the class wasn't quiet because they were sleeping; they were struck dumb by the overwhelming sadness of realizing the world we live in is so fragile and so imperiled. "I mean," Larry tried to help, "if things are so bad, how do you keep on?"

Of course! I heard myself saying, "Well, I have found the antidote to despair requires two ingredients. One is action, and the other is community. It takes both of them. If you try to take action by yourself, you'll get buried in despair quickly. So you have to find support; you have to build relationships to sustain one another. It takes community. And, of course, if your community doesn't do anything—just sits around and talks and worries together—you'll get bored real fast."

Gandhi said no one has the whole truth; everyone has a piece. If we want the whole truth, we need every piece. So no matter how smart I am, and no matter how great my ideas are, they are incomplete, and the only way to improve them is to engage others, listen, build consensus, and work together. We have to be intentional about building community.

Third, don't do it for yourself. On long haul issues, like nuclear abolition, we have to think like William Lloyd Garrison and Susan B. Anthony—we have to devote ourselves to a cause with a sense of hope. Some things take generations, and it is those generations we should focus on. Maybe Martin Luther King, Jr. had a premonition of his death when he said, "I may not get there with you, but I promise you that we as a people will get to the Promised Land." Or maybe he was being realistic about the pace of social change when injustice is deeply embedded in a society.

Things can change in a moment—King's assassination triggered civil rights legislation that would not likely have happened as quickly had he lived. But it was set up by decades of commitment, sacrifice, planning and action by untold numbers of people and groups. We can't see what might be the event that sparks the sudden shift of history, but we can lay the groundwork that makes it possible.

So this reflection offers three principle values to guide all of us as we work for social change against some pretty daunting odds. We should be clear about what our goals are and how we hope to get there—focused energy is essential. We should build community and let it embrace us. And it's not just about us—we are planting seeds like Si Kahn sang about his grandfather's apple trees: "Guess he knew he'd never see/ red fruit hanging on the tree/ But he planted them there for his children and me/ Gone, gonna rise again."

Ralph Hutchinson is the coordinator of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, a RESIST grantee.

Bridges and Walls

continued from page three

queer woman with relative economic privilege who has never been pregnant or given birth, and being someone who doesn't necessarily ever want to be called "Mom" by anyone, I could look at this project from a distance and think it's not about me. However, working with the Prison Birth Project has helped me locate myself within the reproductive justice movement and movements for prisoners' rights, and it has helped me heal. It has helped me grapple with my and my family's history of mental illness, institutionalization, drug use, and rape, and the ways I have learned to live in the midst of this history. It has helped me see that my story is a mixture of real privilege and real pain, a complex thing, full of both politics and warm-blooded human beings. There are certainly important differences between my experiences and the experiences of some of the folks with whom PBP works, but all I can say is that doing this work makes the threads between us shine.

And when I think about it that way, I can't think of anything I'd rather do with my time, or my money, for that matter.



Photo courtesy of the Prison Birth Project

Prison Birth Project members listening to one another's stories during the program at their first community event.

Erika Arthur is a member of the Prison Birth Project Leadership Circle, a RESIST Grantee, and is honored to get to laugh, cry, share meals, and struggle with such an amazing group of people. She has a deep desire to re/build the connections among us that are broken down by criminalization

and imprisonment. She lives in western Massachusetts, was formerly a worker-owner at the Food for Thought Books Collective, and now works as a cook. This article was originally a speech given at the Prison Birth Project's first big event on October 26, 2012.

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GRANT RECIPIENTS

RESIST awards grants six times a year to groups throughout the United States engaged in organizing for social, economic and environmental justice. Below is a list of a few of our recent grantees.

For more information, visit the RESIST website at www.resistinc.org

Arizona Interfaith Alliance for Worker Justice

331 E Willetta Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004, www.azworkerrightscenter.org

The Arizona Interfaith Alliance for Worker Justice was founded in 2006 to mobilize the local faith community to support unions and campaigns to strengthen labor protections. They have partnered with low-income workers in residential construction and hotel and laundry worker campaigns and opened the Worker Rights Center to better meet the expressed community needs for services, training and campaigns that support non-union, low-wage immigrant workers.

A \$3,500 grant from RESIST will help build a union of underrepresented work-

ers in Arizona to end anti-worker policies and injustice in the workplace.

Olneyville Neighborhood Association

122 Manton Avenue, Box 8, Providence, RI 02909, www.onaprovidence.org

Olneyville Neighborhood Association began in 1998 in one of Rhode Island's most marginalized neighborhoods to address day to day living conditions. Olneyville Neighborhood Association has been instrumental in building the statewide coalition "Todos Somos Arizona"

A RESIST grant of \$4,000 will allow Olneyville Neighborhood Association to continue to empower those most affected by the issues. And continue to build state-wide opposition to anti-immigrant sentiment and policies.

Indian People's Action

PO Box 826, Tucson, AZ 85701, www.nwfc.org

Indian People's Action champions direct action to improve the lives and build

the voice and power of Montana's urban Indians as they organize to achieve racial, social and economic equality.

RESIST's \$1,500 grant will help Indian People's Action continue to push for health care reform, to address the lack of ambulance services in Native communities and to organize for full funding of the Indian Health Improvement Act.

Vermont Workers' Center

294 North Winooski Avenue, Burlington, VT 05401, www.workerscenter.org

Vermont Workers' Center was formed in 1998 by a group of low income workers wanting to address a broad range of issues facing workers and their communities. Today they continue to fight for workers' rights, livable wages, healthcare and housing.

A RESIST multi-year grant of \$4,000 will enable the Vermont Workers' Center to continue to expand their mission and vision for social change. They will also continue their campaign work for accessible and affordable healthcare coverage in Vermont, and continue to expand leadership development statewide.